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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
09/930,971	08/17/2001	Shun-An Chen	0941-0306P-SP	1826

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EXAMINER

SUN, XIUQIN

ART UNIT PAPER NUMBER

2863

DATE MAILED: 06/16/2003

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary

Application No.

09/930,971

Applicant(s)

CHEN ET AL.

Examiner

Xiuqin Sun

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-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If the period for reply specified above is less than thirty (30) days, a reply within the statutory minimum of thirty (30) days will be considered timely.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133).
- Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 04/17/2003.
- 2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-13 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1-13 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
- Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
- 11) ☐ The proposed drawing correction filed on _____ is: a) ☐ approved b) ☐ disapproved by the Examiner.
- If approved, corrected drawings are required in reply to this Office action.
- 12) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. §§ 119 and 120

- 13) ☒ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☒ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
1. ☒ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).
- * See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.
- 14) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for domestic priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(e) (to a provisional application).
- a) ☐ The translation of the foreign language provisional application has been received.
- 15) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for domestic priority under 35 U.S.C. §§ 120 and/or 121.

Attachment(s)

- 1) ☒ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
- 2) ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
- 3) ☐ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449) Paper No(s) _____
- 4) ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413) Paper No(s). _____
- 5) ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
- 6) ☐ Other:

DETAILED ACTION

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

1. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

2. Claims 1-3 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Higuchi (U.S. Pat. No. 5790400) in view of Nara et al. (U.S. Pat. No. 6388747 B2).

Higuchi teaches an apparatus, system and method for object inspection (see abstract), comprising: a process executor requesting a plurality of objects to be inspected at a first sampling rate and receiving a plurality of inspection results (col. 1, lines 62-67; col. 2, lines 1-4; col. 2, lines 33-58; col. 5, lines 22-38; and col. 8, lines 58-61); a data processor analyzing the inspection results to determine a second sampling rate (col. 7, lines 50-67); a device storing the second sampling rate (col. 2, lines 15-22; col. 3, lines 19-25 and col. 7, lines 50-67); a controller receiving said second sampling rate from the storage device and changing said first sampling rate of the inspection requested by the process controller to said second sampling rate (col. 7, lines 50-67 and col. 2, lines 15-22); an input device connected to the storage device for inputting of user-defined data (col. 1, lines 62-67; col. 2, lines 1-4 and col. 2, lines 33-58).

Higuchi does not mention explicitly: the objects to be inspected is a plurality of semi-manufactured products processed by a manufacturing equipment; an input device

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connected to the storage device for inputting of a user-defined sampling rate; and a display connected to the storage device, displaying the first and the second sampling rates.

Nara et al. disclose a inspection method, apparatus and system for circuit pattern, and teach: a process executor for requesting a plurality of semi-manufactured products processed by a semiconductor manufacturing equipment to be inspected at a given sampling rate and receiving a plurality of inspection results (see Figs. 2 and 4; col. 8, lines 45-67; col. 9, lines 1-7, lines 37-50; col. 10, lines 62-67; col. 11, lines 1-17; col. 28, lines 58-67 and col. 42, lines 14-24). Nara et al. further teach: an input device connected to the storage device for inputting of a user-defined sampling rate (col. 28, lines 31-41 and lines 58-63); and a display connected to the storage device, displaying the sampling rate for the inspection process (see Fig. 25 and col. 28, lines 27-41).

It would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to include the teachings of Nara process executor, sampling rate input means and the display means in the Higuchi system in order to automatically execute the parameter setting and data process in parallel with the inspecting operation (Nara, col. 2, lines 53-65), and display the output in a user-friendly GUI format (Fig. 25).

It is also obvious that the apparatus and system taught by Higuchi is broad enough and applicable to monitoring the stability of manufacturing equipment, because it would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to utilize the apparatus and system of Higuchi in any manufacturing system for inspecting an object, including a semi-manufactured product processed by

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any manufacturing equipment, in order to dynamically monitoring the stability of the manufacturing equipment.

3. Claims 4-5 and 8-9 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Higuchi in view of Nara et al. as applied to claim 1 above, and further in view of Li (U.S. Pat. No. 6276997).

Higuchi and Nara et al. teach a method and apparatus that includes the subject matter discussed above except that: a semiconductor manufacturing process that is capable of etching the semi-manufactured products such as a wafer and a technique for forming an oxide layer on the semi-manufactured products.

Nara et al. teach a semiconductor manufacturing process that is capable of etching the semi-manufactured products such as a wafer (see Fig. 5 and col. 11, lines 43-67).

Li discloses a method and system and teaches: a technique for forming an oxide layer on the semi-manufactured products (col. 2, lines 12-21).

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to include the teaching of Nara semiconductor manufacturing process and Li oxide layer formation technique in the Higuchi apparatus in order to apply the stability monitoring to semiconductor manufacturing process such as etching a semiconductor wafer (Nara, col. 1, lines 29-41; and Li, col. 2, lines 12-21).

4. Claim 6 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Higuchi in view of Nara et al. as applied to claim 1 above, and further in view of Sandoval (U.S. Pat. No. 6345259).

Higuchi and Nara et al. teach a method and apparatus that includes the subject matter discussed above except that: the process executor is a Manufacturing Executive System (MES).

Sandoval teaches a Manufacturing Executive System (MES) that serves as a process executor used in a computer integrated manufacturing environment (col. 4, lines 27-33; col. 11, lines 6-16 and lines 29-41).

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to include the teaching of Sandoval MES in the system of Higuchi and Nara in order to provides an automated, multi-directional computer integrated manufacturing system and to enable computer integrated manufacturing (Sandoval, col. 4, lines 25-36).

5. Claim 7 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Higuchi in view of Nara et al. as applied to claim 1 above, and further in view of Webster (U.S. Pat. No. 5505090).

Higuchi. and Nara et al. teach a method and system that includes the subject matter discussed above except that: the inspection of the semi-manufacturing products is non-destructive.

Webster teaches a method and apparatus for non-destructive inspection of composite materials such as the semi-manufacturing products (see abstract) by sampling the products at a given sampling rate (col. 9, lines 32-50).

It would have been obvious to include the teaching of Webster technique for non-destructive inspection of semi-manufacturing products in Higuchi and Nara system in

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order to provide a practical technique non-destructively locating faults in composite structures which is suitable not only for in-plant non-destructive evaluation but for field use as well (Webster, col. 1, lines 32-42).

6. Claim 10 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Higuchi in view of Nara et al. as applied to claim 1 above, and further in view of Schmolke et al. (U.S. Pat. No. 6333785).

Higuchi and Nara et al. teach a method and system that includes the subject matter discussed above except that: using a thickness of an oxide layer as a standard for inspection.

Schmolke et al. teach a method in which the thickness of an oxide layer is used as the standard in inspecting a smooth surface of semiconductor wafers (col. 3, lines 45-60 and col.4, lines 1-5).

It would have been obvious to include the teaching of Schmolke inspection of thickness of an oxide layer in Higuchi and Nara system in order to provide a system for quality inspection of a semiconductor object that uses the thickness of an oxide layer as a standard for inspection (Schmolke, col. 3, lines 45-59 and col. 4, lines 1-5).

7. Claim 11 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Higuchi in view of Nara et al., and further in view of Charles (U.S. Pat. No. 6335559).

Higuchi and Nara et al. teach a method and system that includes the subject matter discussed above except that: using an etching depth as a standard for inspection.

Charles teaches a method and device that can monitor the operation of etching a semiconductor wafer by inspecting the etching depth (col. 7, lines 36-53).

It would have been obvious to include the teaching of Charles inspection of etching depth in Higuchi and Nara system in order to conduct quality inspection of a semiconductor object by examining the etching depth as a standard for inspection (Charles, col.7, lines 36-53).

8. Claim 12 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable Higuchi in view of Nara et al., and further in view of Hinkle (U.S. Pat. No. 6190313).

Higuchi and Nara et al. teach a method and system that includes the subject matter discussed above except that: the data processor is an SPC analyzing software application.

Hinkle teaches an Statistical Process Control (SPC) analyzing software application used as a data processor in processing and analyzing the data in question (see abstract; col. 2, lines 59-61 and col. 3, lines 49-61)

It would have been obvious to include the teaching of the Hinkle SPC analyzer in Higuchi and Nara system in order to perform a SPC analysis on the indexed data records (Hinkle, abstract).

9. Claim 13 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Higuchi. in view of Nara et al., and further in view of Juszkiwicz et al. (U.S. Pat. No. 6353169).

Higuchi and Nara et al. teach an apparatus and method that includes the subject matter discussed above except that: said controller is a server.

Juszkiewicz et al. teach a controller that has the capability of converting sampling rates (col. 13, lines 24-38), and the controller is of the functionality of a server (col. 3, lines 62-65).

It would have been obvious to include the teaching of Juszkiewicz et al. server type of controller in the Higuchi and Nara system in order to dynamically configure the system and control the operation of the system (Juszkiewicz, col. 3, lines 62-67 and col.4, lines 43-45).

Response to Arguments

10. Applicant's arguments filed 04/17/2003 with respect to claims 1-13 have been considered but are moot in view of the new ground(s) of rejection.

Claims 1-13 are rejected as new art (Higuchi, U.S. Pat. No. 5790400) has been found to teach the following subject matter: a data processor analyzing inspections results to determine a second sampling rate; storing the second sampling rate; a controller receiving said second sampling rate from the storage device and changing said first sampling rate of the inspection requested by the process controller to said second sampling rate. For detailed response, please refer to section 2 set forth above in this Office Action.

Contact Information

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11. Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Xiuqin Sun whose telephone number is (703)305-3467.

The examiner can normally be reached on 7:00am-4:30pm.

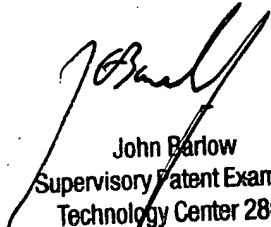
If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, John Barlow can be reached on (703)308-3126. The fax phone numbers for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned are (703)872-9318 for regular communications and (703)872-9319 for After Final communications.

Any inquiry of a general nature or relating to the status of this application or proceeding should be directed to the receptionist whose telephone number is (703)308-0956.

XS

XS

June 10, 2003


John Barlow
Supervisory Patent Examiner
Technology Center 2800